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UNCLAS HARARE 001812

SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION FOOD AID; HARARE

1. Under headline "Flush out rogue NGOs" the government-controlled daily "The Chronicle" dedicated its August 7 editorial to calling on the government to excommunicate all non-governmental organizations (NGOs) accused of "abusing the privilege" to hand out drought relief supplies to rural communities. The editorial comes a day after the newspaper (08/06) published a story in which Home Affairs Minister John Nkomo is quoted as having said that the government would soon ban NGOs that are abusing the privilege to distribute drought relief supplies to rural communities by "spreading anti-government vitriol" and "misinforming villagers that the food shortages were caused by the on-going land reform program." Excerpts:

2. "...It is...mind-boggling that some political nonentities are lying to beneficiaries of the drought relief program and suggesting that it was the discredited opposition that was sourcing the food. It is a pity that these political upstarts have perfected the art of lying to an extent that they even believe their own lies. We urge the government not to waver in its resolve to flush out rogue NGOs that are being used by imperialists out to discredit it and divide the people of this country. President Mugabe has assured the nation that nobody will starve and the government is working tirelessly to ensure that every family has a meal on its table everyday. Credit for these efforts should not be claimed by rogues who want to make us believe that they are politicians working for the people when their only interest is to line their pockets. The government should carry out an audit of NGOs in the country and find out whether they are operating within the parameters that they proffered when they applied for registration. There is no way that we can allow political parties to use NGOs as party structures...."

WHITEHEAD